MARAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. No representation on the subject has been received from the Tea Companies regarding any pressure from the State Government of Assam to shift Corporate Headquarters from outside Assam to Assam.

(c) Does not arise.

Modernisation of the Burnpur based HSCO

*155. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fresh international bids are being called for the modernisation plan of the Burnpur based Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO); and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Government has approved a proposal to convert Indian Iron & Steel Company Limited (IISCO) into a Joint Venture (JV) with Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) holding minority stake. Action plan for the purpose has not yet-been finalised.

Subsidy on Steel for Orissa

*156. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the iron ore and mineral reserve of Orissa is the significant contributor to steel making process of the country;

(b) whether considering the Super Cyclone of 1999 in Orissa, Government and steel companies in the Public Sector have decided or propose to provide subsidy for concessional availability of construction material—steel;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) Yes, Sir. The Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), Nagpur have reported that the total recoverable iron (haematite) ore reserves in the State of Orissa are placed at 3294 million tonnes which account for 33% of the total all-India reserve of 10052 million tonnes. Production from these reserves is used for steel making. The other important mineral reserves available in the State

and useful for steel & alloys industry are coal, chromite, bauxite, manganese ore & dolomite.

(b) to (d) Considering the imminent need to provide relief to the people affected by the recent cyclone that has hit the State of Orissa and the adjoining areas, the Central Government in exercise of powers conferred under Section 5A(2) of the Central Excise Act, 1944, vide its Notification dated 02.11.1999 has exempted all excisable goods falling under the First Schedule to the Central Excise Tariff Act, 1985 (5 of 1986) donated or purchased out of cash donations, for charitable purpose in relation to the relief and rehabilitation of the people affected by the cyclone in the State of Orissa, from the whole of duties of Central Excise leviable thereon from subject to the compliance of certain conditions.

Agreement signed with U.S. on quantitative restrictions

*157. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether an agreement has been signed with the U.S. about early phasing out of quantitative restrictions on certain items;

(b) what are the items that have been shifted from the restricted to the special import licences list; and

(c) what is going to be its impact on our import export trade?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir. India and the United States of America (USA) have reached a bilateral agreement for the determination of reasonable period of time for implementing the rulings and recommendations of the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) dated 22nd September, 1999, which had upheld that India's Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) on imports were not justified on Balance-of-Payments (BOP) grounds. The ruling was in the context of a dispute filed by the USA in the WTO on the QRs on imports maintained by India. The reasonable period of time for implementation, as mutually agreed between USA and India will finally expire on 1st April, 2001 by which date the existing QRs on all 1429 tariff lines at the eight digit level will have to be removed by India.

(b) After signing of the above bilateral agreement with USA, no restricted item has yet been shifted to the Special Import Licence list.